

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-25

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 186472

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN,WB, GW, UK

SUBJECT: BEA THREAT TO TERMINATE BERLIN SERVICES

REF: STATE 177253

1. EUR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STABLER CALLED IN BRITISH EMBASSY CHARGE SYKES SEPTEMBER 14 FOR REPLY, ALONG LINES REFTEL A, TO UK SEPTEMBER 4 APPROACH ON BEA COMMERCIAL PROBLEMS IN BERLIN. STABLER STRESSED POLITICAL IMPORTANCE USG ATTRIBUTES TO CONTINUED BEA PARTICIPATION IN IGS, AND US READINESS EXPLORE, IN GENERAL MANNER, MEANS BY WHICH BEA CAN RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS. SUCH DISCUSSIONS COULD TAKE PLACE IN WASHINGTON AT ANY TIME CONVENIENT TO UK. STABLER
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NOTED, HOWEVER, US RELUCTANT BECOME INVOLVED IN PURELY

TECHNICAL TALKS IN WASHINGTON SINCE, IN OUR VIEW, THESE MATTERS COULD BE MORE APPROPRIATELY HANDLED IN CIVIL AIR ATTACHE FORUM IN BONN. HE ALSO NOTED THAT WE NOT IN ACCORD WITH SOME OF PROPOSALS SET FORTH IN UK AIDE-MEMOIRE PARTICULARLY NEW FARE INCREASES AND PROSPECTS OF INDUCING GERMANS TO INCREASE BERLIN AIR SUBSIDIES.

2. SYKES INDICATED THAT UK APPRECIATED POLITICAL PROBLEMS, INCLUDING CHANCE THAT BEA PULLOUT FROM COMMERCIAL AIR ROUTES LIKELY BE INTERPRETED AS EVIDENCE OF DIMINISHED UK POLITICAL INTEREST IN BERLIN, BUT TALKS NECESSITATED BY BOARD OF TRADE'S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO RUN

BEA ON COMMERCIALLY VIABLE BASIS. WHILE BRITISH UNDERSTOOD US DESIRE KEEP WASHINGTON TALKS GENERAL, BRITISH WOULD WISH TO INVITE BOARD OF TRADE REP AS WELL AS ONE OR TWO POLITICAL REPS FROM LONDON OR BONN TO PARTICIPATE IN WASHINGTON MEETING, WHICH BRITISH HOPED COULD BE CONVENED AROUND OCTOBER 1.

3. AT OUTSET OF CALL, SYKES HANDED OVER ADDITIONAL UK AIDE-MEMOIRE STATING THAT BEA COSTS INCREASING AT GREATER RATE THAN EXPECTED, WHILE TRAFFIC FALL IS ACCELERATING. AIDE-MEMOIRE STATES THAT TRAFFIC IN LAST TWELVE MONTHS TOTALED 4.2 MILLION, VICE 5.2 MILLION IN PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS, AND CURRENTLY RUNNING BELOW 1968 LEVEL OF 3.8 MILLION. AS RESULT, BEA IS LOSING 3 MILLION POUNDS PER YEAR, NECESSITATING COMBINATION OF MEASURES TO OFFSET LOSSES, INCLUDING PRICE HIKES, FRG INCREASED SUBSIDIES, AND REDUCTION IN SERVICES TO 68 FREQUENCIES PER DAY IN EACH DIRECTION IN SUMMER AND 59 IN WINTER. LATTER WOULD RESULT IN LOAD FACTORS IN RANGE 60-70, SATISFACTORY NUMBER OF SEATS AND CONVENIENT SCHEDULE OF FLIGHTS.

COMMENT: IN INTEREST LIMITING FORTHCOMING WASHINGTON TALKS TO IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS OF BEA BERLIN PROBLEMS, WE INTEND TO KEEP DISCUSSION GENERAL AND TO HAVE SESSION CHAIRED BY EUR. PARTICIPATION BY CIVIL AIR ATTACHE IN BONN OR USBER OFFICER CONCERNED WITH CIVIL AVIATION MATTERS WOULD HENCE NOT SEEM DESIRABLE. UNLIKE
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FEBRUARY 1973 MEETING, WE ALSO DO NOT PLAN INVITE BEA OR PANAM PARTICIPATION. WE DO, HOWEVER, PLAN TO TALK TO PANAM HERE BEFORE TALKS TO OBTAIN THEIR EVALUATION AND IDEAS ON CURRENT BERLIN SITUATION. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO PROBLEM PUT FORWARD BY BERLIN (USBER 1576) WHICH REINFORCES OUR INCLINATIONS AVOID NARROW TECHNICAL DISCUSSION IN WASHINGTON. WE ALSO LOOKING FORWARD TO FULL REPORT ON SEPTEMBER 19

BCATAG TALKS RE COSTS OF TEGEL/TEMPELHOF TRANSFER. RUSH

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